

EXCISE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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AIR POUCH

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO: Amembassies MANAGUA, TEGUCIGALPA, SAN SALVADOR

DEPT PASS: MEXICO, AIR FOR USAFSO, NAVY FOR CARIBSEAFRON, USCINCSO (2), DOD

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
NOV 27 1968

DATE: November 24, 1968

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY - Monthly Report of Incidents October 1968
DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REF : REVIEWED BY *Eij* DATE 7 OCT 1968
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

1. Four bombings in Guatemala, two in Jalapa and two in Chimaltenango, marred a generally tranquil celebration of the anniversary of the Revolution of '44 on October 20. They caused limited property damage and injured no one. Although there was a slight increase in terrorist activity during the month, incidents ran at a relatively low level. The increase reflects a larger number of bombings, several unexplained kidnappings and the discovery of two partially decomposed bodies showing signs of torture in the Capital region, as well as a larger number of what appear to be vendetta-type attacks in the Northeast.

2. President Mendez continued to consolidate control over "anti-communist" groups when he instructed the Army to call in the weapons doled out to vigilantes in the Zacapa area during the 1966-67 COIN campaign. The Commander of the Zacapa Base, Colonel Dario Castro, issued the ultimatum and, as time ran out, some of the weapons came in. (A week later Col. Castro was promoted to Deputy Chief of Staff. While he is qualified for the position, many believe that the timing was more than coincidental.) A quantity of arms and munitions, including a dozen or so machine guns, several hundred rifles, some grenades and ammunition, were reportedly returned

The ultimatum provoked a heated debate among the civilians, many of whom feared that "800 guerrillas in Izabal" would attack them. Oliverio CASTENADA, a principal leader in Zacapa, hurriedly sent emissaries to MLN chiefs in Guatemala City to get their advice.

Enclosure: Incidence of Violence Chart

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☒ In ☐ Out

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When he did not receive a reply before the ultimatum expired, he instructed his men to comply but to return as few weapons as possible. The MLN counsel, when it finally arrived, aroused further disappointment among the civilians. The MLN [REDACTED] B1 ED

[REDACTED] urged moderation upon the vigilantes. The enraged civilians at first decided to break from the MLN, but cooler heads prevailed and a strained rapprochement reportedly occurred.

3. Reports that security forces had smashed the band of "Latigo del Sur II" (the alias used years ago by another bandit chief on the South Coast) provide another example of government efforts to control violence in the Northeast. Latigo reportedly commanded a group of 20-25 who had victimized the Jutiapa area. Originally a Rightist vigilante band, the group had become more and more free-wheeling and finally deteriorated into brigandage.

[REDACTED] 5. The State of Siege imposed immediately after the assassination of Ambassador Mein was reduced to the State of Alert condition for the thirty-day period beginning October 28. Itchy politicians, anxious to hold nominating conventions for the 1970 presidential elections, chafed at the continuing ban on political activity and stalled Congressional ratification of the measure for a day. Most political observers are betting that President Mendez will permit all emergency conditions to lapse on November 28.

6. At the urging of the National Police, a Criminal Court judge is attempting to charge two accused subversives with complicity in the killing of Ambassador Mein and to transfer the case to the judge hearing that case. The latter has refused to accept jurisdiction, stating that there is no evidence linking the two, Luis David AGUILAR Martinez and Berta RAMIREZ, with the assassination. An Appeal Court will decide who has jurisdiction [REDACTED] E

[REDACTED] Many Guatemalans believe that both judges are passing the buck to get out from under threats against them. In fact, however, the police apparently hope to use this ploy to keep them "on ice" for a time.

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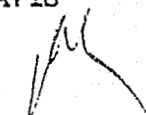
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7. President Mendez seems well aware of the potential threat the Zacapa bands present to stability and chose his timing and method with fine judgment. The Government sees itself caught in a dilemma--security forces cannot afford to alienate the civilian bands if guerrilla activity once again becomes serious in the region. On the other hand, the existence of free-wheeling vigilantes erodes government attempts to bring a semblance of control over the region. As a result of the government's successful operation, the vigilantes were forced to come to grips with their position, and it was obviously an uncomfortable reality they perceived--no support from their political allies, no evidence that military officers would support a coup and every indication that, if necessary, the military would carry out their orders by force.

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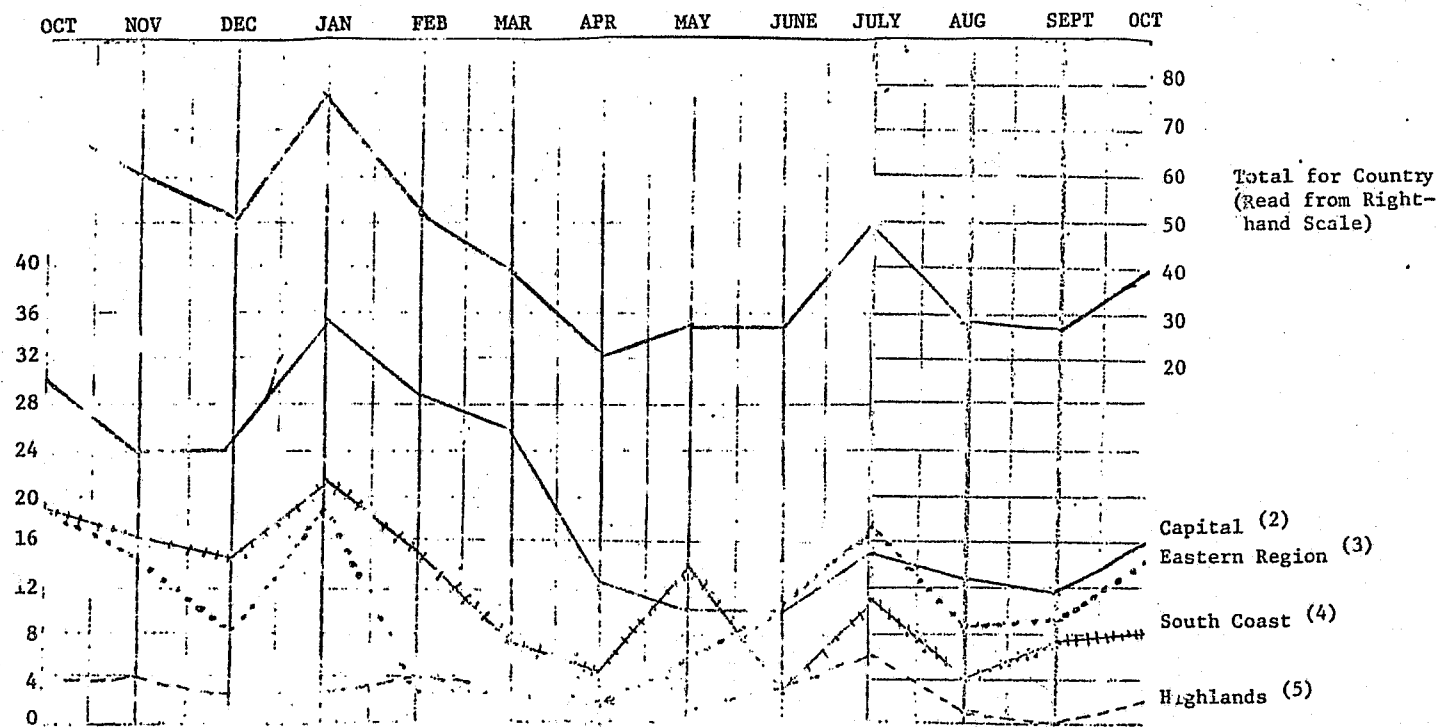
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MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST RELATED INCIDENTS BY REGION
OCTOBER 1967 - OCTOBER 1968



1. For purposes of this graph both acts of violence, such as shootings, bombings, etc., and assassinated bodies found are Counted as incidents.
2. Capital Area includes Departments: Sacatepequez, Guatemala.
3. Eastern Region includes Departments: Jutiapa, Jalapa, El Progreso, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal.
4. South Coast includes Departments: San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa.
5. Highlands includes Departments: Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Solola.

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